

HOW THE UNITED NATIONS INDIRECTLY FUNDS HAMAS

TEAMJII

WEDNESDAY 24/07/2019

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The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Western governments funnel critical financial support to a Hamas-tied “charity” organization in disregard of its known history.

Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) is an international organization based in the United Kingdom that maintains offices around the world, including Gaza and the West Bank. IRW operates, ostensibly, as an international relief and development charity. Their website’s mission statement reads, “inspired by Islamic faith, we have been striving to make the world a better and fairer place.” Apparently, making the world ‘a better and fairer place’ includes financing Hamas.

According to investigations carried out by the Israel Security Agency, IRW has played a central role over the years in channeling money to this terrorist organization. Based on Shin Bet’s findings, Israel’s Defense Minister declared IRW illegal on June 19, 2014 and banned it from operating anywhere in Israel and the West Bank.

This should hardly have come as a surprise to any impartial observer. As long ago as 2006, the Israeli Ministry for Foreign Affairs had designated IRW a terrorist front, noting that “IRW provides support and assistance to Hamas’s infrastructure.” That same year, on May 10th, Israeli police arrested IRW’s Gaza coordinator, Iyaz Ali, who admitted he was aware that “. . . several of the organizations supported by the IRW in Judea, Samaria and Gaza were indeed identified with Hamas.”

A Long History of IRW Ties to Extremist Organizations

While ties to Hamas mark IRW’s most striking alliance, this ‘charity’ organization boasts a long history of personal and financial connections to varied Islamic extremist groups and pro-terror organizations. The reader’s eye cannot fail to notice Al Qaeda-related organizations, including the “Charitable Society for Social Welfare” and “Human Concern International,” as well as the Hamas-funded “Human Appeal International” on the public list of IRW donors. To say this is concerning understates the likely impact of these donors upon IRW actions.

Not only does the IRW receive funds from terrorist organizations, but some of its trustees and directors have long-maintained personal ties to other extremist organizations. For instance, Essam El-Haddad, a former trustee of both IRW and Islamic Relief UK, left IRW in 2012 to become the National Security Advisor for Egypt’s former President, Mohamed Morsi, of the Muslim Brotherhood party. Abdul Wahab Noorwali, another trustee of IRW, was the Assistant

Secretary General of the “World Assembly of Muslim Youth,” an association that the U.S. government has accused of linkage to Osama Bin Laden and the Hamas leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. In 2003, Yassin thanked the World Assembly of Muslim Youth for their continued financial support. Ahmed Al-Rawi, a director of IRW, was the former head of the “Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe” and president of the “Muslim Association of Britain,” both regarded as groups aligned with the European Muslim Brotherhood. And the list goes on.

The Funding of IRW by UNOCHA

While shutting off IRW funding to Hamas falls outside the scope of international mandates, those who defend democracy and human rights might well expect the United Nations to act in concert with Europe and the United States to limit, where possible, IRW access to western funds. To the contrary, the U.N. funds IRW, provoking this compelling question: “what motivates the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), under-written by Western governments, to provide direct financial support to IRW and, thereby, to provide indirect financial support to Hamas through IRW?”

UNOCHA, an arm of the United Nations Secretariat, serves as the primary coordinator of NGO funding and activity and is charged with responsibility “for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies.” UNOCHA determines the relative priorities and needs of societies in crisis, sets strategic response objectives and coordinates the funding of local NGOs tasked with meeting those needs by defining so-called Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs).

IRW has been permitted to continue its activities as a “Participating Organization” in UNOCHA’s HRPs, despite the decree issued by the Israeli Defense Minister that bans the organization for its financial ties with Hamas.

All funding records managed by UNOCHA are publicly accessible from the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) database. Taking into account both the pledged and paid contributions made to IRW after the 2014 banning decree, this organization has been given, or promised, more than \$80 million U.S. Dollars through the UNOCHA humanitarian coordinating mechanism. The European Union, United Kingdom and Sweden are listed alongside other stated donors to IRW.

An Unacceptable Situation

Who would not wish to believe that the governments named above were unaware of the alleged role played by IRW in financing what they themselves deem a terrorist organization? However, following the Israeli warrant against IRW in 2014, the NGO Monitor made a formal inquiry into the funding of Hamas through IRW. While all of the entities named above did reply, none took a position on IRW’s alleged misconduct, nor did they implement a satisfactory monitoring mechanism to track the spending of funds donated to IRW. In other words, the status quo was reaffirmed.

In short, Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) sustains a long, unbroken history of ties with controversial extremist groups that has been banned from operating in Israel and the West Bank because of its role in funneling money to Hamas. Yet, this same organization receives

funds from multiple Western governments through a mechanism set up, approved, and controlled by the United Nations. None of these entities have addressed the unchallengeable Israeli claim that IRW channels money to a known terrorist organization.

This is not science fiction, though it would have seemed so a few short years ago. We cannot answer the question raised earlier about the motivations which direct U.N. funding of Hamas through Islamic Relief Worldwide. However, whatever the motivation, the unbelievable, unacceptable and shocking truth which connects UNOCHA to extremism and terrorism demands immediate, corrective action by the United Nations.

This article originally appeared in *The Times Of Israel*, [here](#).